

by Bob Saydlowski, Jr.

# Triggers II



**Drum Bug**

J.T. Enterprises' *Drum Bug* works as both a drum trigger and contact mic'. The *Drum Bug* is 1 1/4" round, sits 1/4" high, and is encased in a hard black epoxy resin shell. A 7" connecting wire joins the pickup with a 1/4" output jack (an XLR jack is optional). The jack itself is meant to be mounted to the drum by means of a plastic holder sleeve, which adheres to the drum with double-sided tape. The *Drum Bug* can be mounted either on top of or underneath the batter head, and a high-tack adhesive tape circle is used to affix the pickup.

The *Drum Bug* is very durable, and can most likely withstand the occasional shot by a drumstick (though I haven't intentionally tried this). It is mainly being marketed as a contact pickup, with the manufacturer contending that the totally encased pickup provides total isolation and zero bleed-through. Each drum can be independently EQ'd, and effects or other stage instruments will not bleed into the drum mix.

The *Drum Bug* will also function as a trigger device. If your unit requires more voltage for accurate triggering, the company recommends placing the *Drum Bug* on the bottom side of the batter head, two to three inches from the center. I tried this, but found that the physical mass of the pickup affected the acoustic sound of the drum. In addition, the wire could not easily escape from the drum, making head seating difficult. A flat wire would be much better in this application.



As a contact pickup, the *Drum Bug* works fine, but as a trigger, it does leave something to be desired. It retails at \$50.00 each.

Not to fear though, because J.T. has just started to produce *Drum Bug Triggers*. I received some prototypes to check out. The trigger is smaller in diameter than the original *Drum Bug*, but is a 1/2" high. It has an aluminum housing, but I'm told they'll be encasing the piezo and solder points. Atop the trigger is a phono jack without any attached wire. This will create a need for "custom" cables with a phono plug at one end to connect to the trigger, and a 1/4" plug on the other to go to your drum brain (or at the least, a plug adapter).

The sensitivity of the trigger was okay, but I wonder if the future encasement of the pickup will reduce the sensitivity aspect. The trigger has a high voltage output, and worked with all units I tested it with. I'm a bit put off by its physical size, though; I prefer less obtrusive, flatter pickups, but this aspect may not bother you. *Drum Bug Triggers* retail at \$39.95 each.



**Drum Workshop 5000TE**

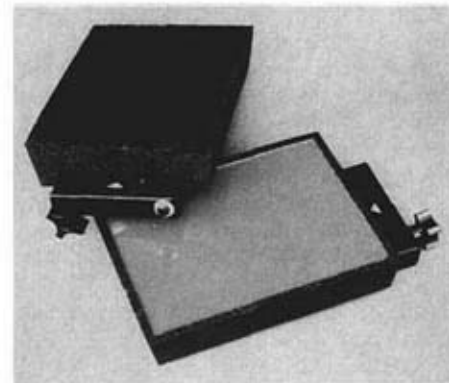
Drum Workshop's *5000TE* is a bass drum triggering pedal that mounts directly on to your acoustic bass drum. It allows normal bass drum playing, while sending a dynamic trigger signal to your sound source. A *5000 Turbo* pedal is used, and DW mounts it onto a red support plate. The pedal's connecting rods are removed to make space for the trigger control box, which sits under the left side of the foot-

board. (A steel rail is fitted to the support plate as well, to protect the control box from any physical damage.)

The box is constructed of high-impact plastic, and has a 1/4" output jack, an AC power supply jack, and rotary controls for impact and sensitivity. A small metal plate is fastened to the underside of the footboard. This reacts with (but does not touch) the control box, setting up a magnetic velocity sensor field to tell the unit when to send a trigger signal.

The adjustable "point-of-impact" setting enables a signal to be sent precisely when the acoustic bass drum is struck, or even *before* or *after* the beater strikes the drum. Experimenting with a slight delay between acoustic and electronic sounds can provide some interesting effects, as you can imagine. Sensitivity is also adjustable for the amount of force you use when playing the pedal.

There is no chance of double triggering with this system; triggering occurs from the pedal swing, not from a piezo or crystal. The *5000TE* has the great feel of a regular DW pedal, and is a wonderful alternative to stick-on triggers or mic's. The single-pedal version retails for \$298.00. (The unit is also available as a *5002TEC* double pedal, retailing at \$643.00.)



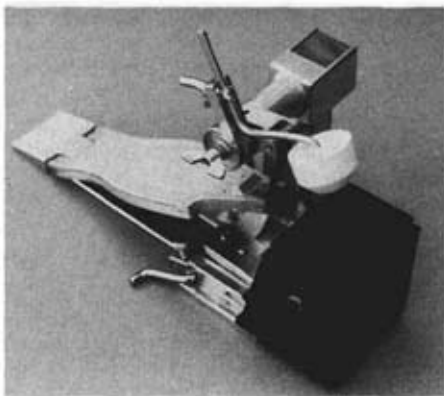
**Igniters**

Add Material Innovations to the growing number of electronic drumpad manufacturers. Their *Igniter pads* measure approximately 6" x 8", and are 2" high. A soft, gel-type rubber, similar to *Superball* material, is used for the rectangular playing surface. The shell (or body) of the pad is made of hard polyethylene foam, available in either white or black. Underneath the pad body is a large steel plate, which has a diamond-shaped hole with an inner clamping plate. The clamp is adjusted by a large knob. This system of mounting enables the *Igniter pads* to fit only onto pencil-type L-arm holders. Adjacent to the clamp, there is a 1/4" output jack.

The *Igniters* have great sensitivity response. Using anything less than a pro-quality stand may cause the pads to falsely trigger as a result of excessive physical vibrations. The ideal playing spot seems to be the center section of the pad, as there is limited response from the edges of the playing surface, and nothing at all from the edge of the pad body.

For my own playing, I feel the surface is a bit too soft, even though I was able to accurately play quick 32nd notes (with every one cleanly triggered). I do have my doubts about how well the foam body of the pad will hold up under long-term usage. I'm sure that too many poorly aimed drumstick hits would dent up the foam edges beyond recognition.

M.I.'s *Igniters* are nice if you want a slightly different drumpad. Colored playing surfaces are available in your choice of red, green, yellow, blue, orange, black, and magenta. One *Igniters* pad retails at \$78.00.



**Kicks Bass Drum Trigger**

Material Innovations is also producing a bass drum trigger unit, appropriately named *Kicks*. The unit is designed for use with your own pedal, and is quite different from all others.

Basically, *Kicks* is a free-standing, hollow, sheet steel box, measuring 4" long by 5" high by 4" deep. Your drum pedal clamps to the open bottom of the box (which, by the way, has a foam strip underneath, with Velcro attached to keep the box level once the pedal is mounted.) Atop the box is a foam-mounted steel plate, which is what the beater hits. The foam mounting provides a bit of "give" to the plate, to make for more comfortable playing. Of course, bass drum pedals don't normally strike in a downward direction, so a special L-shaped beater is provided with the unit. The beater has a flat coned rubber head, and is designed to fit into your pedal's beater housing from underneath, so that the top of the unit is struck (in the center of the plate), sending the trigger signal. (A 1/4" jack is on the side of the box.)

Like the *Igniters*, the *Kicks* trigger is also pretty sensitive. It's so sensitive, in fact, that if your pedal playing isn't solid, and bounces "after the fact," there is the likeli-

hood of those unintended notes triggering as well. The acoustic sound of the unit itself is quite minimal.

The *Kicks* design is simple, but does the job, and will work nicely for those wanting to use their existing bass drum pedal to trigger a sound source without spending a lot of money. The unit retails for \$98.00.

(Material Innovations also produces drum snakes with color-coded plugs, and with varied lengths of each connection within the snake to accommodate pads and triggers placed further away. These offer a convenient alternative to the usual spaghetti mess of separate cables.)



**Trigger Perfect**

Originally developed by an L.A. studio drummer for his personal use, Trigger Perfect pickups offer a level of sensitivity unmatched by many others. The SC-10 triggers have their own sensitivity control built right into the output jack.

The trigger itself is a thin, flat pickup that attaches to the drumhead by means of a double-sided foam adhesive. A 5" long wire connects the trigger to a 1/4" female jack. The jack has a Velcro tab that interlocks with another small Velcro piece (designed to be attached to the drum rim or mount) to keep the jack in place.

The sensitivity pot on the jack is adjustable by using a small jeweler's screwdriver (not included). Turning the screw-pot clockwise reduces pickup sensitivity; counterclockwise increases it. This unique idea shines brightest when using MIDI. With the on-board sensitivity controls of your electronic brain or MIDI drum controller, the dynamic level's top end is cut off, lowering the output of the controller. Using Trigger Perfect's "first stage" sensitivity control, each pickup can be varied before it reaches the controller, allowing triggering up to full

dynamics, but no double triggering. Also, no external control box is needed.

Generally, the best location for the pickup is one inch from the edge of the head. The foam tape holds well, but I had to cover the trigger with duct tape on the bass drum to get it to stay securely (no big deal).

The Trigger Perfect pickup is one of the most sensitive I've used. Discounting the possible fragility of the pickup, I was happy with the clean triggering results. The triggers retail for \$34.95 each.



**The Shark**

I previously reviewed *The Shark* pedal back in December 1986, but since it's undergone some radical design changes, I felt it deserves an update. The current *Shark* model is the same one Rick Allen is using with Def Leppard. While the basic concept is still the same—a linear-transit pedal—a slightly different method of moving the transit block to strike the transducer is now being used.

The old *Shark's* transit block rode on parallel steel rods. On the new model, the block is directly attached to the footboard at a 45-degree angle, and has roller wheels to carry the block along the pedal base. In addition, double springs are now being used, the footboard is one inch shorter and no longer has a toe stop, the travel distance has been reduced, the transducer has been totally revamped, and, in general, the *Shark* has been vastly improved. The feel and response of the pedal is incredibly smooth (as good as, if not better than a conventional bass drum pedal) and its mechanical action is quiet. An XLR connector is standard, and there are Velcro strips underneath the pedal to prevent movement (when playing on carpeted surfaces).

The *Shark* provides accurate triggering; I found no false or double triggering to occur. I'm impressed with all the modifications on the "updated" *Shark*, which retails at \$288.00.



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